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1972/05/02

SA99/D-90

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN... ✓

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May 2, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

HENRY A. KISSINGER HK

SUBJECT:

My May 2 Meeting with the North
Vietnamese

I spent three hours today with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy in a session that was thoroughly unproductive on substance but served to bolster further our negotiating record. I laid out various approaches for discussion, all of which they rejected. They made very clear that they were not prepared either to deescalate the fighting or offer anything new concerning a settlement.

In light of their intransigence, which is almost certainly keyed to the fluid military situation and possibly the expectation of further unilateral concessions on our part, I broke off the private talks until either side has something new to say or their offensive stops. I briefed Ambassador Porter after my meeting and arranged for him to suspend the plenary sessions again at the end of this Thursday's meeting. He will state that there has been no negotiating movement in any channel, which should make it obvious that we had a fruitless private meeting this week.

Highlights

The major utility of this session was to reconfirm their intractability on negotiations, both for our own calculations and, when necessary, the public record. Specifically, I suggested, and they refused, each of the following:

-- That they stop their offensive which is a euphemism for ceasefire.

-- That they agree to return to the status quo ante March 29, 1972, thus allowing deescalation on both sides.

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12356, Sect. 3.4
NSC 9/14/93 F9301251
By MG NARA, Date 9/21/93
SA99

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-- That they restore the circumstances for the 1968 bombing halt understanding.

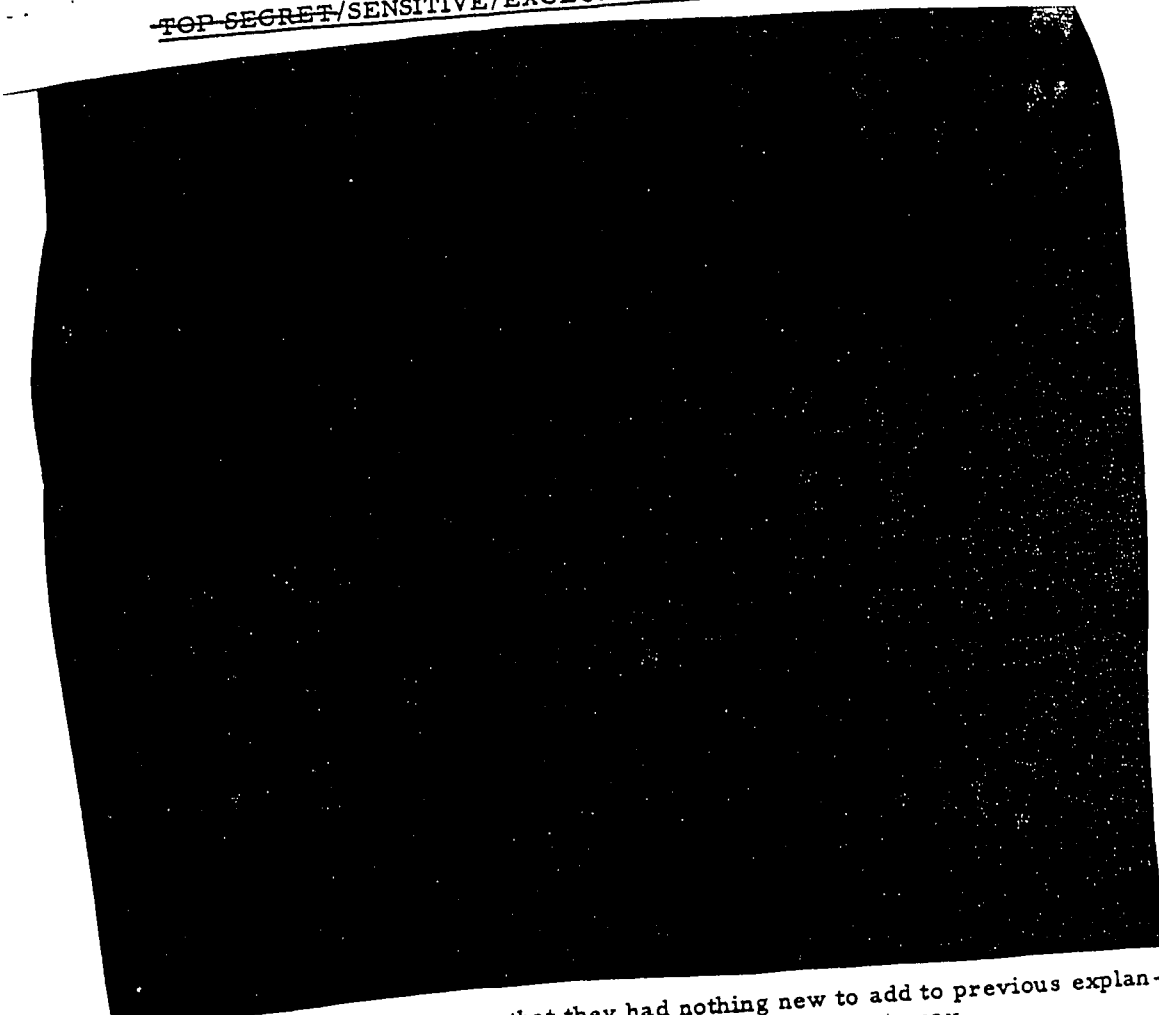
-- That they separate military issues from political issues. (At one point I even raised, without response, the suggestion that we talk about withdrawals and prisoners, not mentioning ceasefire.)

-- That they offer any counter proposals to our eight point plan.

-- That they offer a political solution which did not include the installation of a government they would dominate but which would leave the future genuinely open.

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Xuan Thuy's reply was that they had nothing new to add to previous explanations and they wanted to see if we had anything new to say.

I repeated our position that as a first order of business the offensive must stop. As far as the two point elaboration was concerned, it contained nothing that we hadn't already addressed in our replies to the seven and nine points last summer. I added that if the situation prior to March 29 were restored we would withdraw the reinforcements we had deployed and stop bombing the DRV.

I pointed out however: (1) that we were prepared to talk about military issues alone i.e. the complex of operations involving prisoners and

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withdrawal; (2) I hinted strongly that we were prepared to start discussions with ending the offensive alone; (3) I said our political proposal was not inflexible. Our primary concern was not to maintain any one person but to have a genuinely open process.

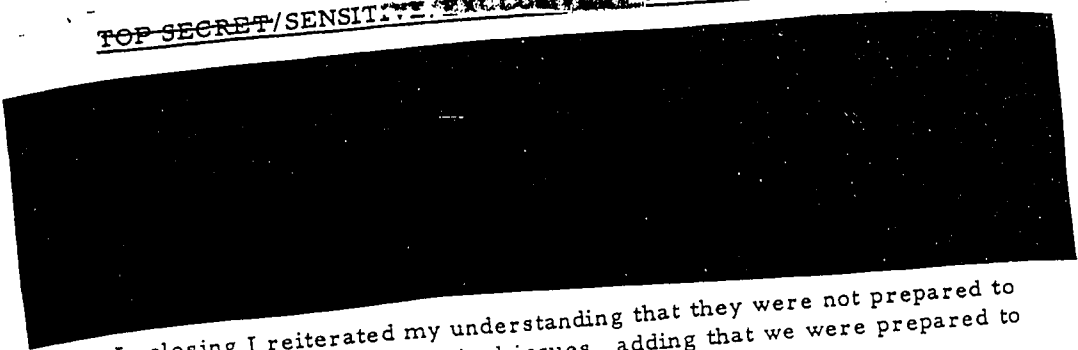
Thuy contended there were new elements in their two point elaboration of February 2. I asked him what they were.

Thuy and Tho explained that all they demanded now was the immediate resignation of Thieu, the adoption of a policy by the Saigon Administration of peace, independence and neutrality, an end to "Oppression," "concentration camps," guarantee of democratic liberties as provided by the Geneva Accords, freedom of the press and so forth. / This proved to be a mere rehash of the PRG two point elaboration publicly put forth in February and I replied that in substance it did not differ from what they demanded last summer. /



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In closing I reiterated my understanding that they were not prepared to separate military and political issues, adding that we were prepared to discuss withdrawals and POWs.

Tho answered that my understanding was correct and that he had never separated the political and military questions.

Our session ended in agreement that we would not divulge the substance of our private meeting today. They were also quite insistent that the fact of our meeting also be kept secret and that if asked we simply refrain from public comment. I consented to do our best on this but pointed out that the occurrence of the meeting would prove far more difficult to protect than its substantive content since my movements were monitored closely by the press and a "no comment" at this juncture would be tantamount to confirmation.

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